

North Chicago, IL. – Congressman Mark Kirk (R-Highland Park) joined Chicago Bulls owner Jerry Reinsdorf for a ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating the opening of a world-class outdoor basketball facility for kids in North Chicago.

Joining in on the festivities were Bulls players' Tyson Chandler and Dalibor Bagaric, former Bull Bob Love, North Chicago Mayor Bette Thomas, CEO/Director of Foss Park District Jim Spriggs and several North Chicago youth. The opening of the facility concludes a reconstruction project organized by the Congressman last year after two North Chicago teenagers were murdered last June. The renovation of the basketball courts was fully-financed by the Chicago Bulls.

"The construction of this basketball facility comes a year after the tragic murders of Jarreau Patterson and David Mackins," said Congressman Kirk. "Building facilities for children in North Chicago will help prevent tragedies like this from ever happening again. By turning our kids away from violence, we make our community safer. I thank Jerry Reinsdorf and the Chicago Bulls for their support. We are honored to have the Bulls organization make a major investment here in the northern suburbs."

The project included resurfacing and painting the existing outdoor basketball court, installing fencing, turnstiles and lighting and the addition of bleacher seating. The facility has two full-court basketball courts as well as the ability to convert the playing service to one main court modeled after the Bulls' playing floor at the United Center. Two portable plexiglass backboards and rims will be used when the main court is in use. The refurbished courts will be used immediately to host the North Chicago Park District's summer basketball leagues.

"The entire Chicago Bulls organization is excited to be able to provide the residents of North Chicago with a first rate basketball facility," Reinsdorf stated at the press conference held this morning. "It has always been our goal to actively create and support recreational opportunities for the youth in our area. By assisting in this project, we are confident that we have created a first class, safe area where the youth of this community can learn the value of teamwork, the benefits of good sportsmanship and the rules of competition."

After the deaths of Jarreau Patterson and David Mackins, Congressman Kirk met with community leaders in North Chicago discussing ways the community could deter young people from violence. One of the biggest problems facing the community was the lack of extracurricular

activities available to North Chicago children. Building a premier basketball facility, open at night, supervised and secure from violence led Congressman Kirk to Jerry Reinsdorf and the Chicago Bulls.

"Sometimes being a congressman goes beyond moving government programs. The Bulls built this project so fast that they are making a difference in stopping the cycle of violence. Thanks to the Bulls, this is public-private partnership at its best," Kirk said.

"I took the guidance from our North Chicago community leaders on how we can save kids," Kirk continued. "With the help of the Chicago Bulls, our children will be playing on a regulation Bulls basketball court this summer; supervised, safe and secured by adults. I appreciate all the support from Jerry Reinsdorf and the Chicago Bulls and thank them for disadvantaged kids in the northern suburbs."

A plaque dedicating the court to the youth of North Chicago was donated by the city of North Chicago and presented by Mayor Bette Thomas. The first basketball tournament is scheduled to tip off on June 28.